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# Investigation into Life Enhancement and Positivity – Theoretical and Empirical Studies on Life Satisfaction

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PhD 2019

Investigation into Life Enhancement and Positivity –  
Theoretical and Empirical Studies on Life  
Satisfaction

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Social Care and Social Work

Manchester Metropolitan University

2019

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## ABSTRACT

Life satisfaction is an important subject for academic and policy attention at individual, societal, and global levels. However, there are longstanding controversies in the research regarding life satisfaction. Confusing use of life satisfaction-related concepts have been identified. Repositioning the concept of life satisfaction and critically reviewing life-related satisfaction studies will clarify these confusions. This analytical commentary presents knowledge on a popular but contested subject, that of life-related satisfaction. This topic is the focus of my selected publications, in which I seek to reconceptualise and reframe the discussion to provide a more comprehensive and meaningful framework for life satisfaction. In addition, I seek to redirect future studies, applications, and policies, ultimately leading to more enabled and resilient societies.

Specifically, this analytical commentary illustrates the current state of knowledge, providing an in-depth and systematic evaluation of the current terminologies related to life satisfaction and well-being; and highlights the urgency for change.

In this analytical commentary, I seek to consider what authentic life satisfaction is. Based on my selected published works, together with the professional context in which the publications were written, this analytical commentary will focus on and:

- I. recognise the deficiencies and problems of contemporary understandings and use of relevant terms and concepts;
- II. make reference to philosophical and psychological thoughts;

- III. review literature within theoretically triangular axes as a frame of reference, namely, life-deep, life-wide, and life-long; and
- IV. propose a new theoretical framework entitled 'Life Enhancement and Positivity' (LEP).

Shifting the paradigm, LEP is formulated to be more meaningful, comprehensive, precise, and parsimonious, considering both structures and dynamics of life. Two major structural domains are outlined.

Among my published works, I have selected seven peer-reviewed papers that will serve as the body of work for this analytical commentary. Five of the papers were published in internationally recognised journals, and two are articles within two academic reference books published by the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Polytechnic University respectively. Under the common theme of life satisfaction, they address different research targets (for example, older and younger cohorts), variables (for example, health-related, psychosocial-related, and work-related) and methods (for example, quantitative and qualitative). These publications, as original contributions to the field, aid the construction of a new meta-level framework that aims to address the aforementioned controversies and ambiguities within the context of a complex and intricate situation as well as to serve as a guide towards a new direction.

## CHAPTER ONE — OVERVIEW

The title of my analytical commentary is ‘Investigation into Life Enhancement and Positivity – Theoretical and Empirical Studies on Life Satisfaction’. In this analytical commentary, I begin with a review of existing literature, and specifically examine strengths and weaknesses of the traditional view and contemporary use of the relevant concepts of satisfaction with life. I also consider the relevant epistemological standpoints for a consideration of life satisfaction and the methodological challenges. Together with my empirical studies and review on my academic and professional journey, I present a critical analysis.

Based on this analysis and my professional development and personal growth, a new term, Life Enhancement and Positivity (LEP), and an accompanying theoretical framework were formulated in response to the current narrow and limiting approach to understanding life satisfaction. The new framework shifts the paradigm to a more comprehensive, meaningful structure and dynamic of life, considering nomothetic and idiographic attributes.

How can we ensure that research about life satisfaction is actually assisting the understanding of people’s life satisfaction, now and in the near future? This question is the foundation of this analytical commentary. The question not only led me to seek a higher degree but also serves as a basis for the argument that it is time to adjust the focus and shift the theoretical lens to be more comprehensive, meaningful, and precise. In this analytical commentary, I provide an overview of the publications and argue that they amount to an original contribution to the field. The submission concludes with a presentation of this

work's contributions and limitations as well as future directions. This analytical commentary constitutes an original body of knowledge and demonstrates how LEP has merit in further studies and applications in at least three ways:

I. Identifies academic controversies, deficiencies, and strengths of life satisfaction research.

II. Demonstrates my respective works and their interrelationship as an empirical base and as evidence in the following ways:

- 1) Uses three proposed axes as a frame of reference: life-deep (depth of living and understanding of life, meaning involved or value-driven), life-wide (variety of life dynamics), and life-long (over the life course from infancy to old age);
- 2) Theoretically and conceptually constructs the 'Life Enhancement and Positivity' theory as a new direction for understanding satisfaction, well-being, and quality of life (QOL); and,
- 3) Elaborates on the two domains of LEP, 'possession' and 'prospect,' discussing the structure (micro- and macro-level) and the dynamics (meta- and chrono-level) of life.

III. Proposes how LEP can be used and extended in future studies (for example, to adopt healthy diversity by understanding relevant epistemological standpoints, their relevant methodological and procedural steps, and their applications by operationalising 'possession' and 'prospect'), and to highlight potential limitations.

This analytical commentary will be of significant use to other professionals and practitioners working in and contributing to the field of social sciences, particularly within the context of Hong Kong and Asia, but also globally.

## CHAPTER TWO — PUBLICATIONS SUBMITTED

The articles submitted are:

1. Lai, C. K. Y., **Leung, D. D. M.**, Kwong, E. W. Y., and Lee, R. L. P. (2015) 'Factors associated with the quality of life of nursing home residents in HK.' *International Nursing Review*, 62(1) pp. 120-129.

(please see section 5.1 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper:

The information is listed in the 'Authors Contribution' of the paper:

DDML (the author) was responsible for data collection and analysis, statistical expertise, drafting of manuscript and critical revisions for important intellectual content (2015:127)

2. Lai, C. K. Y., Kwong, E. W. Y., Lee, R. L. P., **Leung, D. D. M.**, Yip, L. S. Y., and Chung, A. (2014) 'A longitudinal study of the quality of life among elderly residents.' *In*: Lai, C. K. Y. and Yip, L.S.Y. (eds.) *Research anthology of long-term care for Hong Kong older persons*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Yuen Yuen Institute, pp. 3-8.

(please see section 5.1 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper:

Acquisition of data; analysis and interpretation of data; statistical expertise; drafting of the book chapter; critical revisions for important intellectual content; communication with the editors

3. **Leung, D. D. M.** (2016) 'When teaching and volunteering go together: exploring participation characteristics and demographic backgrounds of senior volunteer teachers and their teaching satisfaction.' *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35(3) pp. 330-347.

(please see section 5.2 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper:

Study conception and design; acquisition of data; analysis and interpretation of data; statistical expertise; drafting and revision of the manuscript; communication with the editor

4. **Leung, D. D. M.** (2019) 'Influence of functional, psychological, and environmental factors on falls among community-dwelling older adults in Hong Kong.' *Psychogeriatrics*, 19(3) pp. 228-235.

(please see section 5.3 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper:

Study conception and design; supervision of acquisition of data; analysis and interpretation of data; statistical expertise; drafting and revision of the manuscript; communication with the editor

5. **Leung, D. D. M.** and Tang, E. Y. T. (2018) 'Correlates of life satisfaction among Southeast Asian foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong – An exploratory study.' *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 27(3) pp. 368-377.

(please see section 5.4 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper

Supervision of the study; advanced analysis and interpretation of data; critical review and revision of the manuscript and important intellectual content; communication with the editors

6. **Leung, D.D.M.** and Siu, C.F. (2008) 'Life satisfaction index A – three-factor version.' *In*: Lou, V. W. Q. and Boey, K.W. (eds.) *Handbook of measures for the Chinese Elderly*. Hong Kong: Sau Po Centre on Ageing, The University of Hong Kong, pp. 56-62.

(please see section 5.5 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(6\_LSIA3F)(S5.5)**)

- Personal and specific contribution to the paper

Important analysis and interpretation of data; statistical expertise; significant role of drafting and revision of the book chapter; communication with the editors and the team

7. **Leung, D. D. M.** (2018) 'Use of Q-methodology in a study of older community dwellers facing the largest urban redevelopment and renewal project in Hong Kong.' *Cogent Psychology*, 5(1) pp. 1-9. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1552641>

(please see section 5.6 for details)

(Abbreviation used: **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**)



- Personal and specific contribution to the paper

Study conception and design; acquisition of study-related information; analysis, critical review and interpretation; drafting and revision of the manuscript; communication with the editor

## **CHAPTER THREE — PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT IN WHICH THE PUBLICATIONS WERE WRITTEN**

### **3.1 My profile**

I am a Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol) of the British Psychological Society (2018-current), an Associate Fellow of the Hong Kong Psychological Society, and an Honorary Research Fellow (2015-current) and Honorary Clinical Associate (2010-2014) of the University of Hong Kong. In 2018, I was appointed as a Graduate Research Consultant with the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2020, my title of Chartered Scientist (CSci) was awarded by the Science Council and the British Psychological Society.

I have been involved in research, academia, and the teaching of social sciences and healthcare, and I have worked as a Research Associate at the Chinese University of Hong Kong since 2017. My past work experience in academia and research also includes the following posts: Programme Manager (carrying the teaching track title of Lecturer w.e.f 1 July 2016) at the Open University of Hong Kong (2010-2017); Research Associate at Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2009-10); Research Project Manager at the University of Hong Kong (2007-08); and academic staff (Teaching Associate and Lecturer) at the Vocational Training Council (2004-2007). This work experience has facilitated my career and has also enriched my professional development through various learning opportunities. These include administering research studies, applying knowledge transfer,

managing research projects, and applying research funds. I am also experienced in working in social care and human services including community services for older adults, patients' self-help groups, and people with learning difficulties. The publications in this analytical commentary were developed within my professional and academic contexts from 2008 to 2019.

I have used digital author identifiers as follows:

---ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1757-1219>;

---Google Scholar:

<https://scholar.google.com.hk/citations?user=UJcdVIUAAAAJ&hl=zh-TW>.

### **3.2     My experience of life satisfaction in an academic context**

I studied psychology as an undergraduate, and social science (gerontology) as a postgraduate and, therefore, have had sufficient opportunities to learn and study satisfaction-related concepts.

In addition, my career in teaching, research, and social care has provided me with opportunities to teach relevant content, conduct research, and examine related knowledge. Such frequent and intensive professional and academic involvement and participation have led me to re-conceptualise these concepts relevant to life satisfaction. Additionally, I have a particular personal interest in them.

This analytical commentary is a valuable platform to present my contributions to this body of knowledge, including publications in recognised journals and universities, and critical explorations and review from multiple perspectives, including existential understandings, positive psychology, humanistic perspectives, and psychoanalytical approaches.

### **3.3      Relevant concepts and studies regarding academic discord and turmoil over ‘life satisfaction’**

There have been a range of similar terms related to life satisfaction in the literature. To make the expression concise, in the following sections, I use the term ‘life satisfaction’ to represent itself and relevant terms unless otherwise specified.

Despite several decades of contemporary scholars’ efforts to study the concept of life satisfaction, there are long-lasting controversies and arguments in the literature over what life satisfaction means (Ryan and Deci, 2013). There has been a lack of consensus regarding a clear, precise, and coherent definition, scope, and theoretical framework. It is time to review and reposition the concept of life satisfaction to turn the currently challenging crossroads into a clear path forward. Generally speaking, the concepts need clarification in three areas:

- I.      Are they comprehensive, meaningful, and precise?
- II.     Are they supported by adequate theoretical background?
- III.    Do they really measure what they are intended to measure (which involves the issues of validity and reliability) (Veenhoven, 1996)?

A review of the relevant literature highlighted many similar and related conceptualisations and different terminologies related to life satisfaction. Terms primarily used include life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 1996), QOL (Frisch, 2013), subjective well-being (SWB) (Pavot and Diener, 2008), happiness (Seligman, 2002), and positive / negative affect (Lucas and Diener, 2000). Not only are they

inconsistent in their own definitions across the studies, their meanings and scopes between terms or even within the same term are equivocal.

Second, perceived meanings of current conceptualisations are confusing for both practitioners and researchers. Regarding QOL, Frisch (2013) pointed out that some still closely link the concept with behavioural competencies or ‘functional abilities’, which are often irrelevant to well-being or happiness (see, for example, Diener et al., 1999). Hajiran (2006) highlights that to enhance QOL appears to be merely ‘a means’ for improving well-being rather than the consequence itself. The term ‘well-being’ is ambiguous because it can refer to different aspects, for instance, physical well-being, mental well-being, economic well-being, etc. Even after narrowing it to ‘subject well-being’, it is still considered to be less precise than ‘happiness’ (Diener et al., 2003). While the concept of ‘happiness’ has been discussed in philosophy since the ancient Greeks (Vitrano, 2010), it may also be considered within a Freudian perspective. Freud (1930) defined happiness as an episodic phenomenon and a form of instant gratification or a feeling resulting from satisfaction of needs, while Aristotle referred to it as the highest of all goods in human life (Wienand, 2014). Similarly, in academic literature, inconsistencies and discrepancies in definitions, scope of meaning, and relationships between terms or even within the same term across studies are common.

Third, due to diverse thoughts and rationales, a wide range of measures of life satisfaction have been developed and used leading to mixed results (Thieme and Dittrich, 2015). The following are five examples:

- I. The items in the Life Satisfaction Index A Three-Factor version (LSI-A3F) examine individuals' holistic views of personal life and the variance between the present actual situation, an anticipated situation, and a past situation and comparison of other people.
- II. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) examines the conscious subjective evaluative judgment of one's life and is recommended as a supplement to scales relevant to psychopathology or emotional well-being (Pavot and Diener, 1993).
- III. Ryff's Psychological Well Being (PWB) is a form of identifying one's eudaimonic life and examines psychic health including self-acceptance, relations with others, environmental mastery, personal growth, etc. (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Keyes, 1995).
- IV. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013), SWB needs to be able to inform policymaking, alongside other social and economic dimensions, by measuring eleven domains (from income, jobs, health, skills and housing, to civic engagement and the environment). Additionally, the OECD aims to collect one's evaluations and experiences of life and 'eudaimonic' measures of psychological well-being.
- V. The 'WHOQOL-BREF' developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHOQOL Group, 1994, 1998) measures QOL in physical, psychological, social relationship, and environmental aspects.

Additionally, it is doubtful whether all things that can lead to happiness are good for people; in fact, people may engage with pleasurable things that may not lead to meaningful well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2013), such as sensory pleasure caused by drug misuse or risky driving behaviours. Further complexity and intricacy can be foreseen if cultural differences and different developmental life

stages are taken into account, although these are not the focus of this analytical commentary.

Life satisfaction is commonly considered to be a type of cognitive evaluation. Moksnes, Løhre, and Espnes (2013) refer to the term as ‘a cognitive appraisal of the overall quality of a person’s life, based on self-selected standards’ (p.1331). Pavot and Diener (1993) define life satisfaction as a ‘judgemental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique criteria’ (p.164). Further, Pavot and Diener (2008) consider LS as the cognitive component of the multidimensional construct of subjective well-being, following Diener et al.’s (1999) proposition that the SWB construct is a tripartite category of phenomena that includes: emotional responses (positive affect and negative affect), the satisfaction domains (for example, teaching satisfaction), and global judgements of life satisfaction. However, there was a slight difference in that Lucas and Diener (2000) proposed that SWBs consist of three related but distinguishable elements — positive affect, negative affect, and global life satisfaction—that examine cognitive and affective aspects of SWB. Conversely, some studies conceptualise LS in a global or generic way; for instance, ‘overall’ life satisfaction is an evaluation of one’s life as a whole’ (Urban and Máca, 2013).

Regarding SWB and happiness, the former is viewed as an umbrella term concerned with one’s life evaluation (for example, Moksnes and Espnes, 2013). Some investigators consider SWB and ‘happiness’ synonymous and use the terms interchangeably (Medvedev and Landhuis, 2018; Frisch, 2013). Diener et al. (1999) also noted that within the field of psychology, examinations of SWB are adopted in the study of ‘happiness’. In the meantime, Proctor et al. (2009)



highlighted that the term 'happiness' is associated with a range of different meanings and scores obtained from LS measures are often used to indicate happiness or unhappiness.

In general, life satisfaction, SWB, and happiness are terms used interchangeably. For example, Burton-Jeangro and Zimmermann-Sloutskis (2016) examined the prevalence and trajectory of life satisfaction as a measure of QOL among Swiss elderly women. Frisch (2013) asserted that QOL in gerontology is often equated with life satisfaction. However, in a portion of the literature, these terms have distinctive relationships. For example, Ryff and Singer (1998) suggested that happiness is not a main element of well-being; rather, it is a consequence of a well-lived life. Interestingly, individual scholars (for example, Diener et al., 2010) refer to life satisfaction, positive affect, and low negative affect as three types of happiness.

The QOL concept came to the fore in the 1960s as a societal goal, generally with regard to the material dimensions of living conditions and immaterial dimensions like health (Noll, 2002). The WHO (WHOQOL Group, 1994; 1998) developed QOL measures with physical, psychological, social relationship, and environment aspects as four pillars, for example, the WHOQOL-BREF (Skevington et al., 2004). However, discrepancies and incongruities in this QOL definition and its domains have been debated (Zullig et al., 2005). For example, Bow-Thomas et al. (1999) viewed QOL as the richness of an individual's personal experiences, encompassing biological, physiological, occupational, social, and interpersonal functioning. QOL has also been defined from objective and subjective perspectives (Zullig et al., 2005). However, arguments have ensued regarding

the importance of objective and subjective perspectives. For example, subjective evaluations and interpretations of one's experiences are widely accepted, even at the social policy level, as a new direction although objective life circumstances are also important in determining one's QOL (Pop, 2015).

Life satisfaction has been operationalised differently among studies (Bello et al., 2011). Essentially, it is divided into overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with specific life domains or 'domain satisfaction' (Veenhoven, 1996). For the latter, the commutation has shown inconsistencies. Direct summation of varied life domains has been used for some studies, while others proposed different weights for individual life domains such as work and living conditions. For instance, Cheung (2012) revealed that family income per capita positively influenced life satisfaction, while education and receiving public benefits tended to reduce it. These inconsistencies are partially due to different approaches or methodologies regarding how these concepts are identified and adopted. Regarding life satisfaction for example, there are 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' perspectives (Diener, 1984). The former investigates overall life satisfaction based on many life domains and the latter assumes dispositional differences in the level of satisfaction (Loewe et al., 2014; Diener et al., 2003).

In regard to life domain or domain satisfaction, Rojas (2006) emphasised parsimony in partitioning a human life, but the application of these divisions has been inconsistent (see Table 1).

**Table 1 : Inconsistencies in the identified domains of life satisfaction**

Study	Term used	Number of domains / facets	Domain areas / facets
Argyle (2001)	Satisfaction	7	Education; health; housing; work and employment; leisure; money; social relationships
Cummins (2010)	Satisfaction	8	Harmony in the community; life security; living standards; personal achievement; health; relationships with other people; religion or spirituality; safety
Flanagan (1978)	Quality of life	15	Material well-being and financial security; health and personal safety; relations with spouse (girlfriend or boyfriend); having and raising children; relations with parents, siblings, or other relatives; relations with friends; activities related to helping or encouraging other people; activities relating to local and national governments; intellectual development; personal understanding and planning;

			occupational role (job); creativity and personal expression; socialising; passive and observational recreational activities; active and participatory recreational activities.
Frisch (2013)	Quality of life	16	Health; self-esteem; goals-and-values (or philosophy of life); money (or standard of living); work; play (or recreation); learning; creativity; helping (social service and civic action); love (or love relationships); friends (or friendships); children; relatives; home; neighbourhood; community
Ryff (2014)	Psychological well-being	6	Autonomy; environmental mastery; personal growth; positive relations with others; purpose in life; self-acceptance
Veenhoven, (2013)	Quality of life / happiness	4	Life chances; life results; inner qualities; outer qualities
World Health Organisation (WHO) (1998)	Quality of life	24	Pain and discomfort; energy and fatigue; sleep and rest; dependence on medication; mobility; activities of daily living; working capacity; positive feelings;

			negative feelings; self-esteem; thinking, learning, memory and concentration; body image; spirituality, religion and personal beliefs; personal relations; sex; practical social support; financial resources; information and skills; recreation and leisure; home environment; access to health and social care; physical safety and security; physical environment; transport
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These inconsistencies lead to questions regarding how to divide aspects of life satisfaction in a meaningful way and whether further discussion on the issue would be useful. The totality is questionable regardless of the number of partitions because it may represent only one dimension of the life-wide axis proposed in this analytical commentary if we take the life-long, life-wide, and life-deep axes into consideration. In addition, some studies, for example the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2011), have also measured life overall together with other measures of well-being.

Although substantial efforts have been made in the study of life satisfaction, the current state of the art is filled with uncertainties and struggles, like walking on a dark night or sailing in a stormy sea. Whether current life satisfaction, QOL, and happiness concepts are trending in the correct direction is in dispute. In other

words, do they really measure what they are intended to measure? Since these terms are equivocal, contestable, and ambiguous, we should challenge whether they adequately describe the concepts that we are trying to measure. Therefore, further exploration and re-conceptualisation are needed to clarify the contested terms.

## CHAPTER FOUR — EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANDPOINTS IN UNDERSTANDING LIFE SATISFACTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING THE VOICES OF OLDER PEOPLE

This chapter aims to discuss and acknowledge selected epistemological standpoints in understanding life satisfaction; and to explore the challenges of operationalising methodological issues. Additionally, it includes a consideration of the voices of the older people: why are they not evident, and what is at stake in this silencing?

### 4.1 Epistemological standpoints in understanding life satisfaction

Before asking what life satisfaction is, two questions should be asked: 'What is life?' and 'What is satisfaction?' Prior to asking these questions, we might ask ourselves why we ask such question. The latter question implies the reflective, intellectual, and philosophical characteristics among human beings and this often construct a prerequisite of human-related research studies without argument. The two former questions, however, have in general been either ignored or already definitively set by researchers in many studies related to life satisfaction.

This status quo is not limited to this research area and it can also be found in other fields, such as gender studies that have overlooked a theoretical definition of gender (Pizzorno, et al., 2015). In addition, prior to this analytical commentary, academic discord and turmoil of life satisfaction research have not been indicated and challenged; rather, many studies embrace it and attempt to broaden the category, which is comparable to what McLaughlin (2017) described as the current situation found in studies related to the concept of vulnerability. Similarly, with respect to methodology, the WHO (2017) emphasised that there have been limited metrics and methods used in the field of ageing, which erects a barrier of comprehensive understanding of health-related issues and the usefulness of interventions. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the research area of life satisfaction is not merely a single case that needs to be reviewed and reformed, especially in this ever-changing society, as stated in section 4.2.

Though there are limitations and academic discord over 'life satisfaction', the concept can be understood from different epistemological standpoints. Among my selected work, individual epistemological standpoints have been adopted to study life satisfaction. In terms of methodological terms, a mixed methods approach was often used (for example, paper 4 (**4\_fallstudy**)(S5.3), paper 7 (**7\_Method**)(S5.6)), some used either a quantitative research method or a qualitative research method. While quantitative research has been the mainstream approach in research in the last several decades, the value of qualitative research is increasingly recognised in policymaking, research, and service development and practice in the areas of healthcare, social care, and ageing (Godfrey, 2015). For example, specifically, the power of language elicits a review of research methodology (Redmond, 2019). Subject to the nature and



objectives of the research, adoption of research methods can be tailor-made (see, for example, Fisher et al., 2016) and novel (see, for example, Turley et al., 2016).

There are different epistemological standpoints from which to understand life satisfaction. For ease of discussion, two main and important epistemological standpoints will be discussed and reviewed in this chapter, namely, the positivist approach (highly relevant to the modernist standpoint) and the social constructionist perspective (similar to the postmodernist standpoint).

Firstly, the positivist approach has been dominant in the academic field and research studies for the past several decades. In the quest for objectivity, certainty, and universality, research has focused mostly on quantifying concepts, quantitative research methods, and statistical computation in an attempt to explore information through many 'operations', such as conceptualisation, operationalisation, reliability, standardisation, relationship and causation of variables, mechanism, and generalisation, to name but a few. To take studies of life satisfaction as discussed in the previous chapter as an example, there have been numerous terms, concepts, and definitions proposed for the life-related satisfaction, they are relevant but distinctive to a certain degree. The positivist approach emphasises objectivity; however, under this situation, one simple but important question emerges: Which one represents the reality? This leads to critical concern about the issue of validity and doubt of comprehensiveness. Additionally, though the positivist approach focuses on technical rationality, it brings about the current narrow and limiting approach to understanding life satisfaction; furthermore, some limitations not only remain unsolved but may also even become, to a greater extent, mystifying, such as the increasing number of

similar but confusing terms, concepts, and definitions. It is time to review the overwhelming reliance of the legitimacy of social science on the application of pure science's methods.

In addition, there is less theoretical and empirical controversy surrounding the idea that each human being possesses universal, group-differential, and individual characteristics simultaneously (Lerner and Lerner, 2019). However, nomothetic characteristics of life satisfaction have been given more attention in research, with less interest in idiographic features. Considering this situation, the importance of individual and group differences for life satisfaction has been overlooked. For example, it is not uncommon for studies to set a number of life-domains that are definitive and universal, and each domain in research often bears the same weight, which subsequently affects accuracy, and reality may be distorted—when the older cohort likely attaches higher importance to physical satisfaction, financial domain may be a very key concern for the sandwich generation. Similarly, group means and averaged data derived from heterogeneous groups are useful to provide an overall picture but not for more specific ones, and details about idiographic characteristics and patterns are omitted (see, for example, Hendry and Kloeppel, 2019). On the whole, the positivist approach is pragmatic, useful, and systematic but can lack comprehensiveness and clarity, thus covering only part of 'fact' and 'reality'.

Secondly, the social constructionist perspective provides a new landscape to understand subjectivity and contextuality, to reflect a set of people's values that are of particular importance to them, and to study how people construct and interpret life satisfaction. Considering heterogeneity, multitude, and acceptance

of openness, the perspective enhances contextual, value-constituted, qualitative, and practical knowledge (Burr, 2015), which reflects the diversity of human beings. Completeness, by integrating breadth and depth, is exposed because rich and in-depth information can be collected, for example, the specificity of individual-and-context relations, the idiographic features of human development and life review, and the intricacy of subjectivity. It is believed to provide more benefit to practice, such as service development and intervention, like personalised medicine. However, the nature of social constructionism and postmodernism can result in difficulties in generality, formalisation, and measurement (Kvale, 1992).

To take the selected paper related to understanding of older residents' perception towards urban redevelopment ((**7\_Method**)(**S5.6**)) as an example, in that study, a mixed methods approach was adopted to facilitate the examination of participants' attitudinal patterns effectively because the subject matter was context-bound and stemmed from a socially constructed process and also because the participants, older community-dwellers, possessed intricacies of experience, emotion, and meaning-making. This implies that a multitude of interrelated phenomena could not be explored if using the positivist approach alone.

It is believed that a healthy understanding and adoption of different epistemological standpoints can discard unhealthy chaos in life satisfaction studies, which enriches our understanding of the central core of life satisfaction, though it is challenging to study both the structure and the dynamic of life owing to considering nomothetic and idiographic attributes. Nevertheless, there is historical evidence of balancing a universal aspect and an individual aspect. One

example is psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). On one hand, he developed universal structures of self, consciousness, and developmental stage. On the other hand, he adopted an idiographic approach and used case studies and individual narratives for his analyses and interventions. Another example is Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Not only did he establish the first experimental laboratory in the world and become regarded as the Father of Psychology, but additionally, some of his work is viewed as the most primitive manifestation of a cultural perspective in the emerging discipline (Slunecko and Wieser, 2014). It is believed that different standpoints can provide more information, viewpoints, and tools for researchers to understand life satisfaction. They are not incompatible; rather, they can be complementary and supplementary. With the advancement of research methods, analysis and interpretation work can be increasingly effective and in-depth.

There have been many intricate reasons leading to the long-lasting controversies and academic discord and turmoil over 'life satisfaction'. Although this is not the main focus of this analytical commentary, based on my professional and academic journey, these reasons include but are not limited to historical and traditional issues, limitations of methodological advancement, lack of sound theoretical framework, application and practical concerns, and infrequent dialogues between thought related to life satisfaction studies. Taken together, enhancing a multitude of methodologies, with the advancement of methodology, metrics, and technique (see, for example, Ryan and Deci, 2013), and necessitating a more abstract framework for theoretical integrity are recommended.

## **4.2     The importance of considering the voices of older people**

A human is not only a biological, psychosocial, historical, and cultural being, but also a meaning-making creature (Park, 2016). Further, we live in a context-bound system in which we can shape and are also affected by the environment, which makes each individual different and diverse. Meanwhile, as people age, they have an ever-increasing amount of life experience, and they experience different kinds of life events and development (see, for example, Noordzij et al., 2019). Therefore, our life trajectories become increasingly unique (Lerner and Lerner, 2019). These intra-individual changes and inter-individual differences provide a convincing indication that it is difficult to believe that authentic life satisfaction can be understood in a universal and straightforward manner. Rather, the nature of life satisfaction appears to involve diversity, multitude, and plasticity.

Additionally, thanks largely to the advanced development of science and healthcare, people in general are living longer and healthier lives (ONS, 2019). Therefore, diversity in older age is evident, and there are possible individual and group differences related to perspectives of life satisfaction. It is imperative to understand the authentic life satisfaction of older adults, not only because the population becomes ageing rapidly and the size of the older population is continually increasing, but also because it is argued that ageing can be experienced as a positive process (Lu, 2012). Further, implications will be more positive and impactful for older adults, families and society if extra years of life derived from a longer life expectancy are satisfactory, which can inform policymaking, practice such as healthcare and social care, counselling, and research (see, for example, Government Office for Science, 2016; WHO, 2017;

ONS, 2018; National Health Service, 2019).

Additionally, technical advancement and rapid societal development provide us a valuable opportunity for reflecting that understanding of life satisfaction should be considered thoughtfully and thoroughly. For instance, advanced internet infrastructure and the development of software, including social media and instant communication, increase exposure to a multiplicity of perspectives that facilitates the possibility of greater individualisation of people's trajectories (see, for example, Gergen, 2012). Another example is that societal changes including globalisation influence our lifestyle, preference, and even values in ways that possibly alter our perception and definition of life satisfaction. According to the WHO (2015) and the European Commission (van Staaldunin et al., 2018), ageing and urbanisation are two of this century's significant shifts in the world. Nowadays, with low fertility and mortality rates, there is a growing population of older and mature people. In the meantime, living in an ageing society where the majority of individuals are mature people is different to living in a younger society where younger people are in a majority (Harper and Walport, 2016).

However, the voices of older people have been comparatively overlooked for many reasons. The above-mentioned changing circumstances can be viewed as intricate catalysts that refocus our concentration on opportunities and challenges derived from the shifts, including through the voices of older people. Neglecting these voices might undermine the potential advantages of living longer (Government Office for Science, 2016), and inattention to the voice of the older people is an increasing risk. Similarly, these changing circumstances also place the relevant studies and practices at a crossroads—it is necessary to critically

review the concept of life-related satisfaction, its terminology, its theoretical framework, and its compositional elements that possibly are context-bound and may be a function of changes—for the paradigm to shift.

## CHAPTER FIVE — INTRODUCTION OF EACH PUBLICATION

The articles discussed in this chapter address various areas of research, including micro level (physical, psychological, social, environmental), macro level (societal, environmental) and chrono-level (life experience and perspective) topics.

### 5.1 Paper 1 and Paper 2

Lai, C. K. Y., Leung, D. D. M., Kwong, E. W. Y., and Lee, R. L. P. (2015) 'Factors associated with the quality of life of nursing home residents in Hong Kong.' *International Nursing Review*, 62(1) pp. 120-129.

#### Profile of the paper

Digital Object Identifier	: ✓ doi.org/10.1111/inr.12152
(DOI)/ International	✓ US National Library of Medicine - National
Standard Book Number	Institutes of Health (NCBI) - PMID: 25418050
(ISBN)/ ID	✓ Hong Kong PolyU's Institutional Research
	Archive: hdl.handle.net/10397/26209
Publisher	: Wiley
Impact factor (IF)/	: 1.562 (latest)
equivalent score	
Number of Being Cited	: 24 (English version) and 1 (Spanish version)
/Citations	



Altmetric : 1 (<https://wiley.altmetric.com/details/2922261>)

Selected link : ---US National Library of Medicine - National Institutes of Health (NCBI) (PubMed.gov)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25418050>

Lai, C. K. Y., Kwong, E. W. Y., Lee, R. L. P., Leung, D. D. M., Yip, L. S. Y., and Chung, A. (2014) 'A longitudinal study of the quality of life among elderly residents.' In Lai, C. K. Y. and Yip, L. S. Y. (eds.) *Research anthology of long-term care for Hong Kong older persons*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Yuen Yuen Institute, pp. 3-8.

Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID : ✓ ISBN: 978-988-13391-1-9

✓ Hong Kong PolyU's Institutional Research

Archive: <hdl.handle.net/10397/7291>

Publisher : Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Yuen Yuen Institute

Publisher (*University*) : Yes

Included in Times Higher Education (THE)

Number of Being Cited : ---

/Citations

Altmetric : Not applicable

Older adults generally wish to live in their own home as long as possible; however, some become frail and struggle to decide whether they need residential care to maintain their daily living, and they may face a dilemma over staying at home in the community or choosing residential care services. This decision is not unusual for older adults and their caregivers in a global context (for example, Montayre, Montayre, and Thaggard, 2018; Hertz, 2016; Molinari, 2012; Sereny and Gu, 2011;). In Hong Kong, 91.4 per cent of the older population live in urban and rural communities, with the remaining 8.6 per cent mostly in residential care homes (Census and Statistics Department [C&SD], 2013). There are several options for local residential care, including Care and Attention Homes, Nursing Homes, and the Residential Respite Service. Globally, including in Hong Kong, the population is ageing rapidly, and the numbers of older adults are increasing (C&SD, 2015, 2018). Specifically, compared with the previous decade (1996-2006) in which the proportion of older adults in the total population rose from 10.1 per cent in 1996 to 12.4 per cent in 2006, the increase in this decade was higher, from 12.4 per cent in 2006 to 15.9 per cent in 2016. The number of older adults aged 80 years and over increased significantly by 66.7 per cent over the past decade.

The United Kingdom shows similar population trends. According to the ONS (2018), there were 11.8 million residents (18 per cent of the total population) aged 65 years and above in 2016. Projections suggest that in 50 years there will be an additional 8.6 million adults aged 65 years and above, roughly the current population of London, with the fastest growth in the 85 years and over population. Ageing and aged populations have important implications for the economy, society, public services, and the individual. For instance, owing to the global ageing population and a greater prevalence of age-related conditions, it is

anticipated that both demand for long-term care services and the degree of care requirements will increase (Government Office for Science, 2016). Papers 1 and 2 (**1\_QOL** and **2\_LTC**) were written within this societal context.

For context, Papers 1 and 2 (the model nursing home project) were collaborations between the School of Nursing of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Yuen Yuen Institute - Social Service Department (a local non-governmental organisation, partially funded by the Government). It was envisaged that a model home should simulate a home-like atmosphere and a culture with multiple core values. Additionally, the anticipated facilities would consist of high-standard services, management, and an environment that could provide support for and promote the healthy ageing of residents. Implementing these goals would produce a strong model of the development of future residential care (see, for example, Campbell and Jeffers, 2008; Shur Coyle, 2011).

I studied a model home and put this concept into practice. The project involved developing a database on the health of the older population with annual data collection over a 5-year period. The research adopted a sequential design. Research outputs were generated based on the results of different stages of the project. In addition to Paper 1, a relevant conference paper (not included in this body of work) 'Factors associated with the quality of life of residents in a nursing home.' (Lai et al., 2011) was presented at the Eighth World Congress on Long Term Care in Chinese Communities and Asian Ageing Development Conference '3As in aged care- advocacy, advancement and achievement', organised by the Hong Kong Association of Gerontology in Hong Kong from the 24-26<sup>th</sup> of November, 2011.

Specifically, paper 1 was developed based on a database of 125 valid cases over the first 32 months of the study, and paper 2 was completed using 5-year data and focused on the figure comparison of variables by year (see Table 2 for a comparison of these two papers).

**Table 2 : Comparison of paper 1 and paper 2**

	Paper 1	Paper 2
Publication format	academic journal	chapter in a reference book with International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
Period	May 2008— December 2010	May 2008— December 2012
Time	32 months	56 months / 5 years
Study aim	to examine factors influencing the quality of life of nursing home residents to inform care management policies and service delivery	mainly to investigate the trends and changes of a range of variables related to functional, psychosocial aspects by year
Research design	cross-sectional	longitudinal
Research method	● univariate and bivariate analyses ( <i>t</i> -test and analysis of variance [ANOVA]),	univariate analyses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● multiple regression analysis</li> </ul>	
Measurement tools covered in both papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● demographic and clinical characteristics of the participants (including gender, age, length of stay, having son(s) or daughter(s), maintaining contact with someone not in the nursing home, use of polypharmacy, pain and sleep condition.</li> <li>● Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE)</li> <li>● Mini-Nutritional Assessment (MNA)</li> <li>● 15-item Geriatric Depression Scale-Short Form (GDS-SF)</li> <li>● Modified STRATIFY Falls Prediction Tool</li> <li>● Modified Barthel Index (MBI)</li> <li>● World Health Organisation Quality of Life-Brief version (WHOQOL-BREF)</li> </ul>	
Other specific tools	not covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PQSI)</li> <li>● Neuropsychiatric Inventory - Nursing Home (NPI-NH)</li> <li>● Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory (CMAI-NH)</li> </ul>
Valid cases	125	by year: 122, 149, 117, 199, 129

These papers contribute to healthcare knowledge through an evidence-based research approach designed to enhance the QOL in older residents requiring extensive care.

## 5.2 Paper 3

Leung, D. D. M. (2016) 'When teaching and volunteering go together: exploring participation characteristics and demographic backgrounds of senior volunteer teachers and their teaching satisfaction.' *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35(3) pp. 330-347.

### Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID : ✓ doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.1183238

✓ ERIC Number (ed.gov, US): EJ1111015

✓ Listed in 'science.gov, US'

(background+information+teacher# -  
no. 228)

Publisher : Taylor & Francis

Impact factor (IF)/ : 0.88 (Citescore from Scopus, 2017)

equivalent score

Number of Being Cited : ---

/Citations

Altmetric : 1 (<https://www.altmetric.com/details/8826242>)

Selected link : --- U.S. Department of Education  
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1111015>

The majority of studies related to educational gerontology are focused on active/successful ageing, learning in older adults, educational programmes, and Universities of the Third Age (U3A), a co-operative that provides learning opportunities for older learners. There are different models of the U3A. For

example, the British model emphasises autonomous and informal self-help study groups and the French model links closely with universities, with a heavy emphasis on the receiving side of learning (see, for example: Choi, 2009; Villar et al., 2010). Paid teachers or volunteers who teach educational programmes for older adults have not been a 'traditional focus' in previous studies. Older adults who are teachers are no exception. Furthermore, regarding volunteering, there is a limited amount of research on volunteer satisfaction (Fox, 2000; Wong et al., 2011; Ferreira et al., 2015). This article is unique and significant because it emphasises the role of senior volunteer teachers (SVTs), who are important in the educational setting. While the overwhelming majority of research studying adult education has focused on the learning or learners (Choi, 2009) and a substantial amount of studies relate to volunteerism, studies about SVTs, serving as both teachers and volunteers, have been overlooked in previous research (Villar et al., 2010). In this article, I discuss the dual roles of SVTs, exploring the duties of both teaching and volunteering. Teaching satisfaction can affect organisational behaviours, including commitment and a sense of belonging, and subsequently influence the content and delivery of programmes and the experiences of older learners (Duay and Bryan, 2008). Additionally, Siddiquee et al. (2016) found that more enjoyment and happiness were experienced in unpaid work than in paid work and life work. The findings of this article have shed significant light on the development of this field. Practitioners, policy makers, and the public should be cognisant of the importance of senior volunteer teachers and their teaching satisfaction.

### 5.3 Paper 4

Leung, D. D. M. (2019) 'Influence of functional, psychological, environmental factors on falls among community dwelling older adults in Hong Kong.' *Psychogeriatrics*, 19(3) pp. 228-235.

#### Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID	: ✓ doi: 10.1111/psyg.12386 ✓ US National Library of Medicine - National Institutes of Health (NCBI) - PMID: 30378205
Publisher	: Wiley
Impact factor (IF)/ equivalent score	: 1.518 (latest)
Number of Being Cited /Citations	: Not available (owing to newly published online)
Altmetric	: 1 ( <a href="https://www.altmetric.com/details/50891694">https://www.altmetric.com/details/50891694</a> )
Selected link	: ---U.S. National Library of Medicine – National Institutes of Health (NCBI)(PubMed.gov) <a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30378205">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30378205</a>

There has been rapid growth of the ageing population (see, for example, ONS, 2018; C&SD, 2018) and according to WHO (2011), the number of people with disabilities is increasing due to the world's population ageing and the relevant prevalence of chronic health conditions. It is believed that community dwelling



older adults have a wide range of functional and psychosocial statuses. This paper reports on a fall-risk study for older residents living in Hong Kong to examine the influence of life satisfaction, as well as environmental and functional factors, on falls. The research examined demographic and background information including instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), activities of daily living (ADL), risk of fall, life satisfaction, home safety, and relationships among the variables. Participants were members of the Neighbourhood Elderly Centre (NEC), a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The scope of service provided by the NEC includes health education, educational and developmental activities, provision of information on community resources and referral services, volunteer development, caregiver support, counselling, outreach and networking, social and recreational activities, meal services, and drop-in services.

This study suggests that the requirements of daily living among older adults may change as a result of varied factors, including changes in health status, self-care ability, and living conditions and arrangements. Service providers may not be aware of such changes because of the NGO's lack of workforce and resources and the service gap, a limited service scope offered by different types of organisations or services that are provided separately by different agencies (The University of Hong Kong, 2011).

The study has value as the first to examine the effect of life satisfaction together with functional and environmental factors on falls among community-dwelling older adults in Hong Kong. In particular, results revealed that life satisfaction and IADL were significant predictors of falls. The relationships among these variables were also discussed in the paper. The LSI-A3F was used to measure life

satisfaction. Additionally, the paper highlighted the important roles of life satisfaction and assessment of life satisfaction that would improve home safety, as well as measures for fall intervention, including for well-functioning older adults. Those reporting falls are likely experiencing functional decline and therefore must not be neglected by caregivers and practitioners.

## 5.4 Paper 5

Leung, D. D. M. and Tang, E. Y. T. (2018) 'Correlates of life satisfaction among Southeast Asian foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong – An exploratory study.' *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 27(3) pp. 368-377.

### Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID	: ✓ doi.org/10.1177/0117196818789736
Publisher	: SAGE
Impact factor (IF)/ equivalent score	: 0.717 (latest) 1.173 (5-Year)
Number of Being Cited	: 1
/Citations	
Altmetric	: ---

Live-in Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) are a unique working cohort in Hong Kong; they come from abroad needing work and reside in their employer's residence as legally required. This working group has one of the highest densities of FDWs in the world, making up around 4 per cent of the population. However, their level of satisfaction and its correlates have been under-researched. This paper details a pilot study of 130 participants that examined demographic characteristics and the effects of perceived social support and self-esteem on life satisfaction. The results revealed that being married was a significant predictor of life satisfaction while being single was negatively associated with life satisfaction but had no association with self-esteem. The socio-cultural context,

including cultural perceptions of marriage, was employed in the discussion. The results suggested that providing practical support for FDWs can facilitate their perceived social support and, in turn, their life satisfaction.

## 5.5 Paper 6

Leung, D. D. M. and Siu, C. F. (2008) 'Life satisfaction index A – three-factor version.' In Lou, V. W. Q. and Boey, K. W. (eds.) *Handbook of measures for the Chinese elderly*. Hong Kong: Sau Po Centre on Ageing, The University of Hong Kong, pp. 56-62.

### Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID	: ✓ HKU Scholars Hub: hdl.handle.net/10722/180381 ✓ ISBN: 9789628642465
Publisher	: The University of Hong Kong (HKU)
Publisher ( <i>University</i> )	: Yes
included in Times Higher Education (THE)	
Number of Being Cited	: ≥2
/Citations	
Altmetric	: Not applicable

I contributed to a chapter to a reference book, *The Handbook of Measures for the Chinese Older Population*, which contains research results on measurement validation of variables describing the older Chinese population, the first such academic reference book in the Far East. It was edited by two professors from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, HKU. The target readers include researchers and teachers in gerontology, psychology, and health studies in academic institutions; students studying social work, nursing, physiotherapy, gerontology and issues on ageing; practitioners providing services

to older people; policy makers that determine social care services for older people; and laypeople who are interested in this topic. This book is an important reference for learning and for those working in the field.

I participated in the validation of a scale used in a previous gerontological research project. The psychometric work then became the basis of a book chapter detailing the LSI-A3F' in the Handbook. The chapter included an introduction of the scale, content of the assessment, validity and reliability of the scale, and references.

The reference book is significant in the field because some of the measures, including the one analysed in my book chapter, were translated and validated based on measures originally developed for non-Asian populations. The scale validated in the Chinese version has been used as an effective tool for measuring life satisfaction in Chinese society. I am the first author of the chapter, and the second author is an experienced senior staff member of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Society.

## 5.6 Paper 7

Leung, D. D. M. (2018) 'Use of Q-methodology in a study of older community dwellers facing the largest urban redevelopment and renewal project in Hong Kong.' *Cogent Psychology*, 5(1) pp. 1-9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1552641>

### Profile of the paper

DOI/ ISBN/ ID	: ✓ <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1552641">doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1552641</a>
Publisher	: Cogent OA, Taylor & Francis Group
Impact factor (IF)/ equivalent score	: (indexed in Scopus, PsycINFO, British Library, EBSCO, ProQuest Psychology Journals, Web of Science's ESCI, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), CrossRef and Taylor & Francis Online, etc.)
Number of Being Cited /Citations	: Not available (owing to new publication)
Altmetric	: Not available (owing to new publication)

This paper responded to two historically significant demographic shifts, ageing and urbanisation, emphasised by the WHO (2015) and the European Commission (van Staaldin et al., 2018). Application of the Q-methodology to community dwelling older adults in a large-scale urban redevelopment and renewal project has been scant. This methodology paper discussed the Q-methodology as an alternative research method used in the first study that

investigated perceptions and attitudinal patterns of older adults facing the largest urban redevelopment and renewal project in Hong Kong.

In addition to the theoretical and philosophical positions and the methodological implications of the Q-methodology, this study was an approach to qualitative analysis through the quantification of patterned subjectivities. Eight themes related to 'time', 'space', and 'person' aspects were outlined to inform policymaking in developing societies to be age-friendly and environmentally sustainable, with the ultimate objective of strengthening life advancement and positivity of the older adult community-dweller population.

Additionally, this paper addressed advantages of the methodology in the fieldwork studying older adults and provided contextual background, methodological considerations and procedural decisions.



## CHAPTER SIX      —      A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### 6.1      Why change? The importance of constructing a new theoretical framework using LEP

There is substantial and rich literature on life satisfaction aimed at facilitating the understanding of relevant concepts (see, for example, Lee and Cagle, 2018; Frijters et al., 2014). In the meantime, the fragmentation of understanding surrounding them has increased, leading to serious controversies and inconsistencies from, for example, academic positioning and methodological bases to findings and implications. Additionally, the limitations and deficits in understanding life satisfaction affects the validity and reliability of the research in this area. It is thus critical to explore and discover a new way of thinking about a more useful framework for LS. For instance, are there any meta-psychological concepts that cover the current meaning and understanding of life satisfaction? Many life-related matters and daily living issues are omitted from the life satisfaction concept, including individual choice and personal growth (see, for example, Rogers, 1967), self-determination (see, for example, Fromm, 1941), self-actualisation (Maslow and Langfeld, 1943) existential understanding of people's circumstances (see, for example, Yalom, 1980), meaning in life and living (for example, Frankl, 2014), the value of what people possess and treasure, spiritual aspects, and positivity (see, for example, Seligman, 2002). To deepen the discussion and highlight its complexity, in addition to the literature review, the following employs a proposed triangular axis - life-deep, life-wide, and life-long -

as a framework and foundation using my selected publications and literature review to illustrate the critical situation, demonstrate the need for change, and set a backdrop for understanding the new theoretical framework.

In recent decades, relevant concepts like life satisfaction, QOL, well-being, and happiness have received much attention in research, services, and society, from individual to global levels. The importance of these concepts in a contemporary society that is facing a range of important shifts, including ageing and urbanisation (WHO, 2015), as highlighted in paper 7, **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**, and paper 4, **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**, the advancement of information technology as mentioned in paper 5 **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)**, the importance of service quality in long-term care setting as emphasised in papers 1 and 2, **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)** and **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)**, and an increase in volunteering among retired adults as elaborated in paper 3 **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**. However, inconsistent definitions, measurements, and application of concepts and terms fragments the picture, leading to difficulties in comparing studies and results, reviewing the literature, and evaluating the service impact in an effective, convincing, and holistic way.

LEP reframes the scope to be more meaningful, comprehensive, and precise, but also more parsimonious. Searching for meaning may not equate to dissatisfaction with life; however, the presence of meaning in life influences life engagement and satisfaction and vice versa. This analytical commentary and the new framework do not aim to examine how people find meaning in life; however, it is a relevant question because searching for meaning in life is reported to be associated with life satisfaction and, therefore, may provide insights for establishing of a new framework. Additionally, one will be satisfied with life, advance the level of living

(partly relevant but not equivalent to the standard of living, which is always linked with materialism), and transcend life if he/she has the capacity to accept challenges and handle them in the interest of making life and things better. Life can be improved and enhanced, and LEP is a paradigm shift. As a new theoretical framework, LEP provides pragmatic and practical functions and integrates the structures and dynamics of life in terms of time, scope, and plane. Its theoretical and methodological divides can facilitate understanding in both the academic and practice sectors.

## **6.2      Construction of a new theoretical framework**

Under the confusing matrix of ideas identified above, it is time to reiterate a question: ‘How can we ensure that research on life satisfaction is actually assisting the understanding of life satisfaction of people, now and in the near future’? It is time as well to present a new direction for the concept, as a step forward.

LEP is based on a critical review of my own works, a review of other relevant literature and issues, and thoughts and perceptions collected in my professional context in which publications emerged, which include:

- I.      Recognition of the deficiencies and problems of contemporary understandings and use of relevant terms and concepts;
- II.     Making reference to philosophical thoughts; and
- III.    Developing Life Enhancement and Positivity (LEP) as a theme and an organising theoretical framework.

LEP is constructed using of the proposed triangular axes as a frame of reference—life-deep, life-wide, and life-long—together with references to selected influential perspectives.

### 6.2.1 Life-deep axis

First, on the life-deep axis, I propose that ‘depth’ of life and meaning of living can be strengthened in a re-conceptualisation. Humans often search for meaning in life and endeavour to make life worth living (Frankl, 2014; Seligman, 2002). The importance of existential phenomenological thought should be taken into account when life satisfaction and LEP are measured (Spinelli, 2005). For Freud (1930), humans, prone and vulnerable to sadness, nevertheless struggle for happiness:

The programme of becoming happy, which the pleasure principle imposes on us cannot be fulfilled; yet we must not—indeed cannot—give up our efforts to bring it nearer to fulfilment by some means or other (Freud, 1930:83).

Happiness can be reached by various pathways, according to Freud, including enjoyment of beauty, devotion to work, friendships, etc. (Freud, 1930; Erikson, 1950). More importantly, Thompson (2004) highlighted that

Freud’s conception of pleasure is more than a theory of affect, an ontological category that is concerned with a much larger question: what it means to be human (Thompson, 2004:142).

The movement of positive psychology encompasses several concepts, including forward-looking, positiveness, and resilience, which provide insight for and nurture the initiative of LEP. This strongly implies and supports the need for review of current conceptualisations and ultimately a new pathway.

However, from a research standpoint, few collaborations within disciplines and schools in psychology or social science have adequately addressed how people existentially understand their circumstances, personal existences, and prospects. However, as mentioned in the previous section, agreement regarding the definition, scope and domains of life satisfaction and happiness is lacking; there is also a lack of agreement on which existential aspects should be included.

One of my papers, **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**, examines the perception and attitude of older community dwellers regarding an urban redevelopment and renewal project. I used the Q-methodology, a measure calculated through a qualitative analysis of a quantification of patterned subjectivities (Akhtar-Danesh et al., 2008; Shemmings, 2006), which can collect richer information and deeper meaning from research targets, with a phenomenological root that espouses social constructionism. As older adults have substantial life experience and have developed deep and strong attachments with the community, all of which may lead to intricate perceptions, this paper, **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**, argues the importance and utility of using the Q-methodology to study perception, attitude, and epistemological understanding of research targets including older adults and focused on the procedural decisions of the study. Since no single quantitative inquiry can investigate complex life dynamics in their totality and scores cannot represent the entire story, I contend that both logical positivism (Buchanan, 1998) and social constructionism (Burr, 2015; Gergen and Gergen, 2012) have their respective strengths that can complement and supplement each other. More importantly, logical positivism and social constructionism are not in conflict; rather, a presupposition of this analytic commentary is that they can both be incorporated into an advanced vision (see, for example, Anastas, 2012; Mulej, 2008; Buchanan,

1998).

Life satisfaction was not the direct focus in the paper **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**. Rather, it reflected on currently used terms and probed for new territory for the concept of life satisfaction, resulting in relevance of the life-deep axis. This paper, **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**, introduced why and how the mentioned study and the methodology led to the discovery of context-bound knowledge about humans in a community that is not merely a physical place but rather, a place that provides a context and platform for humans to plan, pursue, and actualise a life and living, through human psychological processes, activities, and experiences (Brandenburg and Carroll, 1995), because social life is viewed to be multifarious (Constance and Barry, 2007).

The rationale and justification for the new framework correspond to my other experiences: when I teach developmental psychology, personal growth, and introduction to psychology, I always ask students three key questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How can I get there? There is a consensus that these questions are related to lifespan development and should not simply refer to self-identity; rather, the answers to these questions constitute and carry values and attitudes that can reflect one's life meaning. Intrinsically, answers to these questions should link with searching, identifying, and possessing life meanings that are conducive to life satisfaction. A possible reason for this is that awareness of life meaning facilitates sensing and perceiving one's existential understanding and, in turn, the level of life satisfaction. Further, I proposed that the presence of meaning in life is related to life engagement and satisfaction because well-being is affected by one's inner 'strength' to search for life meaning (Seligman, 2002).

In examining the literature, my ideas are supported by previous research. For example, Burrow and Hill (2011) argued that purpose in life satisfaction is a mechanism through which identity leads to advanced levels of well-being. In terms of existential understanding, Carmody (2013) pointed out that existential principles that guide how people behave bring about life satisfaction; likewise, other research reveals that the presence of perceived meaning in life is associated with physical and psychological variables including physical health, self-esteem, happiness, and life satisfaction (see, for example, Melton and Schulenberg, 2008; Halama and Dědová, 2007; King et al., 2006). Additionally, meaning in life could predict advanced life satisfaction (Halama and Dědová, 2007). These positive relationships were even found in pre-adolescents and adolescents (Brassai et al., 2011). These empirical studies provide an inferential ground that existential phenomenology contributes towards the concept of life satisfaction.

The presence of life meaning and searching for meaning may not be the same. Brandau (2008) highlighted that searching for meaning is likely not a straightforward variable; it may not be operationalised without difficulty nor measured directly. Further, to experience meaning in life may be more significant than to search for meaning (Brandau, 2008), though searching for meaning in life can never represent that a person is disappointed with their life. Additionally, the term searching for meaning is easily entangled with metaphysics and philosophy.

Because of the discrepancy in definitions of currently-used concepts related to life satisfaction, it is difficult to claim that most of them address questions related



to meaningfulness. However, QOL as defined by the WHO is close to this meaning:

An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHO, 1994).

This provided a reason and encouragement for me to use the Q-methodology to explore the understandings of older community dwellers facing an urban redevelopment and renewal project in **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**.

There are close relationships among theories, concepts, metrics, and methods. The WHO (2017:22) highlighted that:

The current metrics and methods used in the field of ageing are limited, preventing a comprehensive understanding of the health issues experienced by older people and the usefulness of interventions to address them.

It is time to rethink issues surrounding 'theories and concepts'.

Two of my publications, **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)** and **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**, consider paid and unpaid work. The first article examined correlates of life satisfaction among foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong; the second investigated participation characteristics and demographic backgrounds of senior volunteer teachers and their teaching satisfaction in Hong Kong. Concepts of life satisfaction and teaching satisfaction were respectively used in the studies. Whether paid or

unpaid, work constitutes part of our life and links with our existential understanding and meaning of life.

Three additional published studies, **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)**, **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)**, and **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**, were conducted in community-living and institutional settings. Either the concept of life satisfaction or that of QOL was employed. For these studies, a wide range of variables, both functional and psychosocial, including cognitive status, nutritional status, depression, risk of falls, home safety assessments, self-care performance, life satisfaction, and QOL were examined within several settings or contexts with different targets (for example, community-dwelling older adults and nursing home residents with different levels of functionality and psychosocial status).

Taken together, it makes more sense to re-construct and re-engineer 'life satisfaction' as a meta-level, comprehensive but precise concept, for example, by acknowledging the element of life meaning (specifically, presence of life meaning) in the life satisfaction and its influence on life satisfaction.

### 6.2.2 Life-wide axis

Secondly, regarding the life-wide aspect, social sciences first introduced QOL as a subjective method of portraying a global satisfaction of life (Learmonth et al., 2015) while gerontological studies previously referred to the concept mainly in terms of functional ability (Kelly, 2013). Based on Baltes and Baltes (1990), a QOL measurement in gerontology began in the 1960s as part of an attempt to define and enhance 'successful ageing.' I adopted the World Health Organisation-Quality of Life (WHOQOL, 1995; 1998) measurement named WHOQOL-BREF in my studies and published work ((1\_QOL)(S5.1), (2\_LTC)(S5.1)). As mentioned in my paper, (1\_QOL)(S5.1), QOL has become increasingly important for assessing nursing home residents' quality of care.

According to the WHO (1998), QOL is defined as

Individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHO, 1998:8).

The WHOQOL-BREF is an abbreviated version of WHOQOL-100 that consists of 24 facets (listed in Table 1). The WHOQOL-BREF adopts each of the 24 QOL facets in the WHOQOL-100, together with two 'benchmark' items from overall QOL and general health (not for scoring). As a well-known and esteemed international organisation, the effort of the WHO is acknowledged. However, four fundamental questions remain: I) Does it cover the whole of life and living? II) Is it ever possible to do this? III) Are we all reducible to a certain number of facets?

#### IV) Are they measuring life satisfaction and if so, to what extent?

Life is colourful and varied. No one questions that work, paid or unpaid, plays an essential role in life. Lent and Brown (2013) refer to occupations as any activities or roles that occupy people's time and energy, regardless of whether compensation is involved. However, conventional and secular views of work have been limited to employment and, specifically, to a paid job, and this view is common in previous research. In preparing the paper **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**, related to teaching satisfaction and retired volunteer teachers, I faced two challenges. First, previous studies about both teaching satisfaction and retired volunteer teachers were limited. Overwhelming numbers of theories regarding job satisfaction have been developed related to paid jobs, including paid teaching duties. However, these theories were not convincing enough to be adopted for studying volunteer satisfaction (for example, Englert and Helmig, 2018; Metz, 2017), due to their distinct role and service nature. Second, scant corresponding measures of satisfaction have investigated the adequacy of their psychometric characteristics (van Saane et al., 2003). Additionally, among relevant measures, their scopes and specificities are diverse (Englert and Helmig, 2018).

After considering various options, the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ–Short Form) was used in the study **(3\_TS)(S5.2)** (Weiss et al., 1967). The scale includes the following facets: ability utilisation, achievement, activity, advancement, authority, agency policies and practices, compensation, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social service, social status, supervision-human relations, supervision-technical, variety, and working conditions.

Facets in the MSQ-short form that measure teaching satisfaction are never revealed in measures related to life satisfaction, well-being, and QOL. Subsequently, is it correct that the more multifaceted a scale and a theory are, the more comprehensive and holistic our life and living can be explained? Is it appropriate to continue to study the direct 'partition' of our life? Are these partitions valued equally by everyone? No matter how life is classified into different facets and dimensions, it is questionable that they are uniformly weighted with less theoretical or empirical justification.

Additionally, my empirical works that support the life-wide axis and either life satisfaction or QOL were adopted in various groups of people, such as a volunteer group (for example, **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**), a working group (for example, **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)**), community dwelling residents (for example, **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**), long term care residents (for example, **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)**, **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)**), and older citizens facing an urban redevelopment project (for example, **(7\_Method) (S.5.6)**).

In summary, there may be an ideal concept of life satisfaction that covers all of our life domains to reflect real life and living that are multifarious, colourful and dynamic. To quantitatively operationalise life satisfaction and to focus its comprehensive nature, it not only covers the scope of domain satisfaction (also known as 'life domain') but also takes life-deep and life-wide axes into consideration. Alternatively, to jump out from the controversy loop to be more meaningful, convincing, and effective, it is imperative to start using meta-psychological dimensions that can guide the future developments of variables and metrics.

### 6.2.3 Life-long axis

Third, taking lifespan and lifelong aspects into account is central to understanding life satisfaction. In one of my works involving psychometrics, **(6\_LSI-A3F)(S5.5)**, in which I validated the LSI-A3F, I made reference to Veenhoven in regard to life satisfaction. The European scholar uses ‘course of life events’ and ‘flow of experience,’ to understand life satisfaction (Veenhoven,1996). This understanding corresponds to the LSI-A-3F items that examine individuals’ holistic view of personal life and the variances between the actual situation and anticipated situations, past situations, and the situations of others. These are impressive because they cover a timeline, which supports my view that including lifespan perspectives in the life satisfaction concept is important and meaningful.

Similarly, the Life Satisfaction Index A introduced by Neugarten et al. (1961), revised by Adams (1969), and adopted in a local study in Hong Kong (Chi and Beoy, 1992, 1994) includes items from lifespan perspectives. For example, their themes contain comparisons between past and present lives, between present and anticipated future lives, and between an individual’s present life and another’s present life. Based on the results of my validation work **(6\_LSI-A3F)(S5.5)**, this index contains three factors: ‘happy mood’ (examples are ‘This is the dreariest time of my life’ and ‘Compared with other people, I get down in the dumps too often’); ‘satisfaction of possession’ (examples are ‘As I grow older, things seem better than I thought they would be’ and ‘I would not change my past life even if I could’); and ‘absorbing living’ (examples are ‘I have made plans for things that I’ll be doing in a month or a year from now’ and ‘The things I do are as interesting to me as they ever were’). In view of the satisfactory

properties of scale, appropriateness to the research targets, and insightful and enlightening perspective, one of my papers about factors affecting falls among older community dwellers, **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**, used the validated LSI-A3F covered in **(6\_LSIA3F)(S5.5)** to measure life satisfaction among this group.

While current research is dominantly focused on the current state of life satisfaction, well-being and QOL, comparatively less attention has been paid to individuals' 'future prospects' and 'past experience'. Regarding 'future prospects', in recent decades, the growing movement of positive psychology and psychotherapy has placed importance not only on symptoms or negative aspects encountered by clients but also on the positive aspects of human existence (life satisfaction, hope, meaning, choice, faith, etc.) (Johnson and Wood, 2017). These lead to stronger assurance and confidence that the concept 'has (its) future'—prospects and appraisal of one's own future.

Likewise, possibly because some studies about subjective well-being measure society's progress to inform policymaking or identify the latest trends (OECD, 2013), compared with actual, present, and current life circumstances, past experience appears to be less focused on life satisfaction (Brown et al., 2004). Therefore, another challenge to the current concept emerges—it seems that (past) experience was generally not highlighted or even covered in general definitions.

However, like 'future prospects', past experience should also be taken into consideration in the study of life satisfaction. In fact, experience has been considered a priority and important by some perspectives of psychology,

including psychoanalysis. In his theory of psychosocial stages, Erikson (1950; 1968) postulated that life is closely linked with individuality or meaning in life as part of the natural developmental process, for example, identity in adolescence, integrity in older adulthood, etc. Experiencing life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and pursuing a meaningful life were seen as important in emerging adults as developmental tasks in a transitional period. Additionally, some brain imaging studies (see, for example, Opitz et al., 2012) revealed that old age may normally include sufficient or effective cognitive reappraisal, providing evidence-based support for the idea that the study of life satisfaction cannot stop at a point in time nor at a specific age. This possibly supports the psychoanalytical approach that gave prominence to the influence of experience, life history, past experience, and developmental trajectory on life satisfaction.

It is argued that study of life satisfaction cannot be limited to a point of time nor a specific age group. Rather, level of satisfaction of life should be a function of one's past experience, present life, and future prospects. It is lifelong and applicable to all age groups.

In conclusion, such thoughts and empirical research suggest that life satisfaction cannot be fully understood in isolation from life-long (lifespan), life-deep, and life-wide aspects.



#### **6.2.4 Hypothesised meta-psychological domains**

LEP is theorised to be a goal of life-related satisfaction, QOL and subjective well-being. It is conceptualised as a judgment of the degree of enhancement and positivity of a person's overall life by considering two hypothesised meta-psychological domains, 'possession' and 'prospect'. Particularly, 'enhancement' is referred to as life engagement, life experience, and life eagerness, leading to life enrichment. 'Positivity' is outlined as path (forward), positiveness, and progressiveness (see, for example, Neppl et al., 2015; Masten, 2014). Like life satisfaction, LEP can be differentiated into high and low levels. The ultimate goals of LEP are strengthening, advancing, and ultimately transcending, life. With backing by three axes — life-deep, life-wide, and life-long — to represent its complexity, LEP is not assumed to be a unidimensional phenomenon. Its two domains provide the basis for further study, including measure and measurement. This constitutes the basis for operationalising and analysing. With the basis mentioned in previous sections, the following paragraphs detail this new conceptualisation.

The concept name of LEP is informed by existential thought and humanistic spirit for 'enhancement,' and positive psychology for 'positivity'. Its domains are informed by humanistic psychology for 'prospect' and existential and psychoanalytical perspectives for 'possession'. In each domain, both objective and subjective dimensions should be included. The new framework is viewed as containing a more comprehensive scope. This 'paradigm-shift' should turn theoretically to a precise framework and often, methodologically, to an interdisciplinary empirical approach. The question can subsequently be further

explored and answered: How can we ensure that research on life satisfaction is actually assisting the understanding of life satisfaction of people, now and in the near future?

As one of LEP hypothesised domains, 'possession' refers to the approach used and scale items presented in **(6\_LSI3F)**. Additionally, it corresponds to 'capacity' and 'resource' (Sen, 1993) and to what Allardt (1973) proposed as three basic human needs, 'having', 'loving', and 'being', and to a psychoanalytical concept, 'wish fulfilment'. Therefore, possession is hypothesised to include all aspects one possesses, from the concrete physical health and financial assets to the abstract psychological strength and spiritual satisfaction. A second hypothesised domain, 'prospect', refers to the approach used and the scale items presented in paper 6, **(6\_LSI3F)**, and to the hope and anticipation revealed in a study mentioned in paper 7, **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**.

From this theoretical vantage point, the concept of LEP takes the transcendent form of life satisfaction with the inclusion of life-deep, life-wide, and life-long axes. The micro, meso, and macro levels are situated as interacting objects of study. Supported by philosophical thoughts, my empirical studies, and the literature, LEP is a convincing and highly compatible area of study that will be applied in novel, advanced, and greater ways. For example, future research should emphasise the exploration, examination, and interpretation of data.

The LEP concept is capable of providing a theoretical framework and an empirical basis for future research. As a more abstract framework, it is assumed to provide a meta-plane that covers the relevant concepts with higher flexibility and inclusion

for studying the concept of satisfaction in the future. Specifically, LEP is more compatible than current terminologies with respect to time, scope, and plane. It covers past, present, and future; it is more specific; it goes beyond the physical, psychological, social, and environmental aspects; and it is supported by philosophical thoughts and theoretical constructs. The synergy of enhancement and positivity is hypothesised to have advanced accurate coverage of life satisfaction and QOL. A comparison between LEP and the current terms commonly used are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 : Comparison between LEP and the current terms commonly used**

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Life Satisfaction / Well-being / Happiness / Quality of Life</b>	<b>Life Enhancement and Positivity</b>
Term nature	<b>Umbrella</b> term  -unclear, abstract, prone to misunderstanding / misleading	<b>Specific</b> term  -more compatible  -clearer and more specific
Brief definition	<b>Varied</b> - subject to different perspectives	<b>Enhancement</b> (from <b>EEE</b> : Engagement, Experience, and Eagerness)  <b>Positivity</b> (from <b>PPP</b> : Path [forward], Positiveness, and Progressiveness)
Dimension / domain	<b>Varied</b> - subject to different perspectives	<b>Two</b> (Possession and Prospect/ Pursuit) consisting of <u>structural component</u> (micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- dimensions) and <u>dynamic component</u> (meaning [meta-] and chrono-dimensions)
Time focused	Mainly focused on <b>present</b>	Covers <b>past and present</b> (Possession) as well as <b>future</b> (Prospect)

Theoretical base	<b>Few or none</b> – subject to individual study	<b>Fully</b> supported and informed by philosophical thoughts and perspectives
Way Forward	<b>Controversies</b> in a loop	<p>LEP as a <b>new way (model)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-further methodologically, empirically and clinically based elaborations to be required to apply the framework to empirical studies</li> <li>-to link it with therapy / counselling and for mental health promotion</li> <li>-for advocacy</li> <li>-to inform policy</li> </ul>

The LEP framework shifts the perspective and frame from a straightforward division of life and living to a structural (micro-, and macro-levels) and dynamic (meaning [meta- and chrono-level]) view of life. LEP measures intersections among structural realities, dynamics of life, and subjective experiences. Specifically, it will deliberately encompass variables that contain divergent aspects of structure and dynamics. The framework widens the scope of inquiry and extends the options for available action. In particular, it provides new directions for quantitative operationalising and statistical analyses, since no

single quantitative inquiry can examine complicated life dynamics in their totality. It can also facilitate a larger capacity for measurement levels (for example, individual and societal) and narratives to document the rich meaning, in terms of depth, breadth, and length, of life. Both social constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2015) and quantification are compatible. In light of the aforementioned studies, Life Enhancement and Positivity (LEP), containing two hypothesised components of 'possession' and 'prospect', is theorised to be a goal of advancement and transcendence of life (see Table 3 in Chapter 6 and Figure 1 in Chapter 7).

## CHAPTER SEVEN — RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE PUBLICATIONS, THE NEW FRAMEWORK, AND THE WAY FORWARD

### 7.1 Relationships between the publications and new framework

The reviewed publications span a twelve-year period between 2006 and 2018 (one was published in print in 2019). They are relevant to the disciplines of psychology and social care, with the following classifications:

- (I) Levels (micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, chrono-, and meta-);
- (II) Domains (corresponding to the life-wide axis, including physical, psychological, social relationship, environmental, societal, vocational, life and perspective, and life enhancement);
- (III) Themes (including QOL, life satisfaction, volunteering, friendly living environment for older adults, teaching satisfaction, and existential understanding);
- (IV) Age groups and sub-cohorts (corresponding to the life-long axis); and
- (V) Research methodology that assists in exploring the depth of life and meaning of living, including quantitative and qualitative methods (corresponding to the life-deep axis).

The central themes of this literature were satisfaction with life and daily living, leading to the theorisation of LEP and this study, ‘Investigation into Life Enhancement and Positivity (LEP)—Theoretical and Empirical Studies on Life Satisfaction’.

These publications can be linked with reference to a frame of life-deep, life-wide and life-long axes. For ease of demonstration, their relationships will be elaborated in terms of these triangular axes respectively as follows. Among these three axes, relationships of the publication on the life-deep axis are direct and straightforward. **(7\_Method)(S5.6)** is the methodology paper for a study adopting the perspective of social constructionism, rooted from a phenomenological stance, integrating the quantification of patterned subjectivities and qualitative analysis in a mixed-methods study. The other six publications can be broadly classified as positivist. They include a range of research methodologies including cross-sectional **((1\_QOL)(S5.1))**, accelerated longitudinal design (sequential) **((2\_LTC)(S5.1))**, and quantitative **((3\_TS)(S5.2), (4\_fallstudy)(S5.3), (5\_FDW)(S5.4), and (6\_LSIA3F)(S5.5))**.

In terms of the life-wide axis, these publications demonstrate the width and breadth of life and contribute knowledge on ‘domain satisfaction’ (Veenhoven, 1996). For example, **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)** and **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)** reviewed QOL, particularly in physical, psychological, social relationship, and environmental domains; and their relationships with physical, psychosocial, and demographic statuses within a long-term care setting. **(3\_TS)(S5.2)** focused on teaching satisfaction and volunteering and how participation characteristics and demographic backgrounds affected teaching in learning settings.



**(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)** investigated the effect of life satisfaction, as well as environmental and functional factors, on older residents' falls in the community. Three domains of life satisfaction (LSI-A3F), 'happy mood', 'satisfaction of possession', and 'absorbing living', were included in the analyses. **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)** examined the relationship among life satisfaction and demographic and psychosocial variables in an occupational context. **(6\_LSIA3F)(S5.5)**, in the first academic reference book focusing on psycho-geriatric measures in the Far East, demonstrates the development and properties of the LSI-A3F with items depicting comparison between past and present lives; present and anticipated future lives; and one's own and another's present life. **(7\_Method)(S5.6)** is a methodology paper that highlights the person-environment fit and how life enhances and proceeds to the environmental changes. More importantly, LEP constitutes its archetype in this paper.

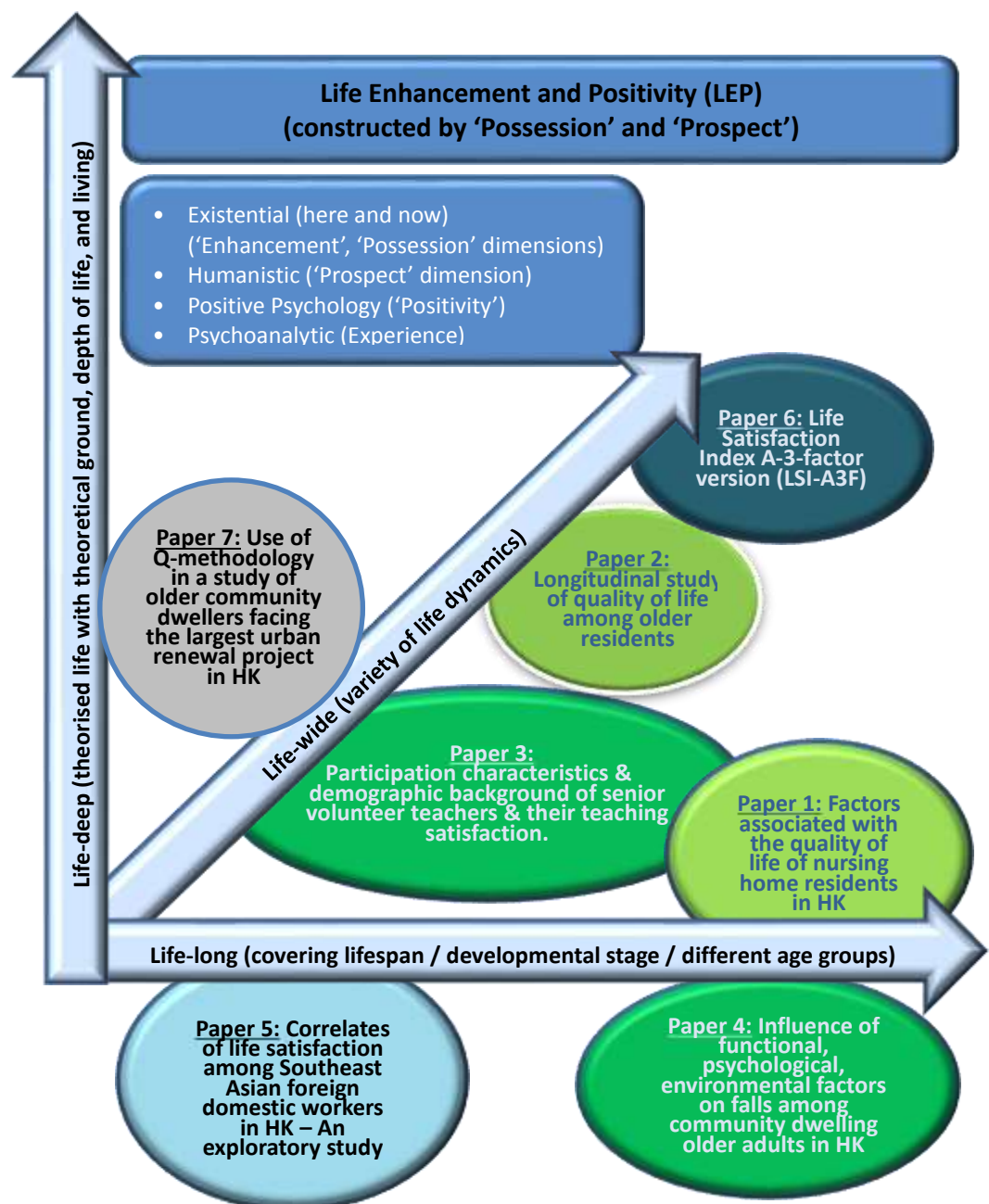
In terms of the life-long axis, older cohorts, including older community dwelling residents **(4\_fallstudy)(S5.3)**, nursing residents **(1\_QOL)(S5.1)**, **(2\_LTC)(S5.1)**, retired volunteers **(3\_TS)(S5.2)**, and younger cohorts, including young workers **(5\_FDW)(S5.4)**, are covered in these publications. Although **(6\_LSIA3F)(S5.5)** mentioned the measure commonly used in adults, the perspective adopted in the index and its validation can be applied across age groups. Similarly, the Q-methodology was used in the older community dwellers in **(7\_Method)(S5.6)**, but the research philosophy and methodology are applicable to other age groups as well. These empirical studies explored the legitimacy of both external-quantitative-observable and internal-qualitative-observable categories of knowledge and how to know (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, they contribute to the construction of the new theoretical framework and facilitate ontological and

epistemological richness, including the nature of existence and the study of the nature and grounds of relevant knowledge.

Triangular axes representing the variety of life and multifarious living have empirical-based support that makes reference to my publications as exemplars alongside the literature review, which includes both social constructionist and positivist perspectives. Specifically, LEP is the fruit of extensive literature review and a critical review of my publications, together with my collected thoughts. Under the common new study theme of life satisfaction, they cover different research targets (for example, older adults, young adults, workers, and volunteers), variables (for example, functional, health-related, work-related, psychosocial, and environmental), and methods (for example, quantitative and qualitative) across nearly the entirety of the lifespan. Although the studies cannot be directly compared, they contribute to the construction of a new framework at a meta-level that aims to address the controversies and ambiguities raised by previous research.

The theoretical framework of LEP and the inter-relationships among the research outputs and LEP in a three-axis graph (Life-deep, Life-wide, and Life-long) are shown in Figure 1, and a comparison among published papers is shown in Table 4.

**Figure 1 : Theoretical framework of LEP and the inter-relationships among the research outputs and LEP (illustrated by triangular axes: Life-deep, Life-wide, and Life-long)**



**Table 4 : Comparison of published papers**

	<b>Paper</b>			
<b>Number</b>	1, 2	3, 5	4	6, 7
<b>Abbreviation</b>	(1_QOL)(S5.1), (2_LTC)(S5.1)	(3_TS)(S5.2), (5_FDW)(S5.4)	(4_fallstudy)(S5.3)	(6_LSIA3F)(S5.5), (7_Method)(S5.6)
<b>Level</b>	Micro-	Meso- , Exo-, and Macro-	Micro-	Chrono- / Meta-
<b>Domains</b>	Physical, psychological, social, environmental	Societal and vocational	Environmental	Life and perspective (no.6) Life enhancement (no.7)
<b>Theme</b>	Quality of life	Life satisfaction; volunteering	Friendly living environment for older adults	Life satisfaction (no. 6) Existential understanding (no.7)
<b>Age group</b>	Older adults	Younger age groups and retired persons / volunteers	Older adults	Older adults
<b>Sub-cohort</b>	Residential care home residents;	(Younger age groups) Young adults; foreign workers	Community residents	N/A
<b>Research methodology</b>	Cross-sectional (no.1) Accelerated longitudinal design (sequential) (no.2)	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative (no.6); Mixed methods (no.7)

## 7.2 **For the future**

I propose that LEP can restore order precisely, reframe a comprehensive and meaningful scope of life satisfaction, and redirect studies, services, and policies, leading to enabled and resilient societies. LEP not only covers current relevant and similar terminologies; because it is a meta-level concept and reframes the scope of the issue, it is more meaningful, comprehensive, precise, and parsimonious.

In addition to being an original contribution to the academic, research, and practice areas, it serves as a new direction. A major strand running through these published works references life-deep, life-wide, and life-long axes that perceive life and living as stereoscopic and humans as active agents. Specifically, the contribution is not based solely on the published works themselves; rather, it is derived from the professional context and journey from which the publications emerged. The theoretical framework is delineated with roots in an ontological view to identify the nature of existence of LEP, which could fundamentally guide how people think about life and satisfaction, academic study, and practical application, including clinical settings. This analytical commentary demonstrates the paradigm shift and new theoretical lens.

This analytical commentary not only reviews the work I have completed, it also considers the continuing trajectory of my future academic work. I intend to prepare journal articles to introduce and promote this new theoretical framework. In particular, future works will operationalise 'possession' and 'prospect' as well as methodological and procedural steps such as scale development and

validation. LEP will be employed to guide and justify the selection of measurement items.

New datasets will subsequently be developed to examine further relevant issues, such as LEP's relationship with and effects on other potentially associated concepts and issues. Empirically and clinically based elaborations are needed to apply the framework to empirical studies. With theoretically grounded and methodologically sound research methods and metrics, these new measures will be used in research and clinical services. For clinical settings, it will also be important to evaluate the role and effect of LEP in counselling and psychotherapies, as well the role of LEP in policymaking, from regional to global levels, such as the WHO.

It is imperative to apply and use LEP, to highlight advances that facilitate our authentic understanding of life satisfaction, and to propose contributions to our field and society.

### **7.3      Limitations of this body of work**

The aim of this commentary was to introduce a new rigorous and valid theoretical framework. This framework is well suited to understanding life satisfaction and resolving the real life-satisfaction-related issues that people face in the post-modern society. The multiple vectors for the study provide for and enlarge our understanding of the central core of life satisfaction. These can be brought together to represent a synthesis of cutting-edge contemporary approaches to life satisfaction. The new theoretical framework opens an innovative horizon in understanding life satisfaction.

However, given the long tradition and habitual use of old terms and concepts, time and effort are needed to pave the way for acceptance of this new framework. It may be a long and challenging journey to implement the paradigm shift.

LEP is highly compatible, academically valuable and full of humanity. The analytical commentary provides a meaningful start towards positive change. However, operationalising LEP along with its domains and dimensions will be difficult. Immediate and future efforts will focus on developing methodological and tactical methods and techniques, as well as putting the theory into practice. Interdisciplinary dialogue on the future of life satisfaction is recommended.

## CHAPTER EIGHT — CONCLUSIONS

Longstanding controversies over the concept of life satisfaction in research have made previous studies and results confusing. The confusion is multiplied when combined with confusing terminology, including vague and sometimes misleading definitions. This academic discord and turmoil over 'life satisfaction' have raised doubts about whether the concept can be comprehensive, meaningful, and precise, whether it can be supported by adequate theoretical background, and whether it has sufficient validity and reliability. Consequently, it has been difficult to reflect and represent the totality of study results and the scope of applications.

My selected peer-reviewed publications contribute to the construction of the new theoretical framework and facilitate ontological and epistemological richness. Additionally, through a critical review of these publications, together with my thoughts collected during my academic, research, and professional journey, I identified deficiencies and limitations in the contemporary understanding and use of related concepts. Adding a comprehensive literature review and references to philosophical thoughts, resulted in intellectual stimulation that allowed me to generate and initiate a new theoretical framework, Life Enhancement and Positivity.

The new framework is delineated with roots of ontological perspectives; meta-psychological correlates; and theoretical, empirical, and experiential building blocks for the term and its domains. As a more abstract framework, LEP is anticipated to cover relevant terms and explore innovative angles and planes as



a new approach for further studies. 'Possession' and 'prospect' are hypothesised as fundamental domains of the LEP that will provide higher flexibility and inclusion in studying the concept of life satisfaction.

As the outcome of critical reflection, the review of my works, and my thoughts, LEP represents an accumulation of knowledge pertaining to theoretical constructs and empirical studies, providing a new direction to reframe the focus and scope, redirect future research, applications and policies, and facilitate enabled and resilient societies. It can certainly be anticipated that the introduction of the new framework will advance towards a unique and uncertain start since academic, research, and professional areas no longer rely heavily on the traditional schemas and habitual practice. This will potentially involve considering and adopting different epistemological standpoints that have respective strengths and constraints, as discussed in the preceding chapter; and that require consideration of how to achieve their complementary advantages, for example, the positivist approach's use of statistical computation and the social constructionist's analysis of subjectivity, and correspondingly, consideration of how to transcend their respective limitations, for example, difficulties with generalisation for qualitative data and complications in quantifying perception and the inner world. Such issues demand that it must be more than rating the subject matter on a five- or seven-point Likert scale.

Despite possible uncertainty and hesitancy regarding this 'paradigm-shift', LEP will experience a positive and meaningful start with support and favourable situations and timing. Particularly, in theory, the legitimacy of the new paradigm is, to some degree, contributed by societal changes and demographic shifts. In

practice, benefitting from technological and methodological advancement that provide more sophisticated research methods, metrics, and techniques for understanding LEP from nomothetic to ideographic levels, further methodologically, empirically, and clinically based elaborations and extensions will be required to enrich LEP studies and to integrate them as a whole picture. Overall, this analytical commentary demonstrates unique contributions to the literature and urges researchers to act in concert to address and promote LEP such that it may withstand and ride out the ambiguous and confusing current situation in this field of study and benefit the field and society more broadly.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 – List of abbreviation

ADL	-----	Activities of Daily Living
BASE	-----	Bielefeld Academic Search Engine
C&SD	-----	Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong
CMAI-NH	-----	Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory
DOI	-----	Digital Object Identifier
EEE	-----	Engagement, Experience, and Eagerness
FDW	-----	Foreign Domestic Worker
GDS-SF	-----	Geriatric Depression Scale-Short Form
HKU	-----	The University of Hong Kong
IADL	-----	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
IF	-----	Impact factor
ISBN	-----	International Standard Book Number
LEP	-----	Life Enhancement and Positivity
LS	-----	Life Satisfaction
LSI-A3F	-----	Life Satisfaction Index-A Three-Factor version
MBI	-----	Modified Barthel Index
MMSE	-----	Mini-Mental State Examination
MNA	-----	Mini-Nutritional Assessment
NEC	-----	Neighbourhood Elderly Centre
NGO	-----	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPI-NH	-----	Neuropsychiatric Inventory - Nursing Home

OECD	-----	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	-----	Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom
PMID	-----	PubMed Unique Identifier
PolyU	-----	Hong Kong Polytechnic University
PPP	-----	Path (forward), Positiveness, and Progressiveness
PQSI	-----	Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index
PWB	-----	Psychological Well-Being
OCUL	-----	Ontario Council of University Libraries
QOL	-----	Quality of Life
SVT	-----	Senior Volunteer Teacher
SWLS	-----	Satisfaction with Life Scale
SWB	-----	Subjective Well-Being
THE	-----	Times Higher Education
U3A	-----	Universities of the Third Age
WHO	-----	World Health Organisation
WHOQOL	-----	World Health Organisation Quality of Life
WHOQOL-BREF	-----	an abbreviated / brief version of WHOQOL-100 Scale